ANXIETY IS THE MOTHER OF PERCEIVED BAD INTENTIONS:

TRUSTING ONE'S PARTNER MAY IMPROVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By

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Abstract

Verbal aggression is a thorn in the side of anyone who wishes to resolve a conflict. Romantic relationships, rife with conflict, can suffer when conflict involves verbally aggressive behavior. Individuals with listening anxiety may have greater difficulty managing these behaviors in romantic conflict when there is a lack of interpersonal trust. This study examines the impact of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. Two hundred ninety-eight participants responded to assessments of verbal aggression, listening anxiety, and dyadic interpersonal trust related to a specific romantic relationship. Results from post hoc analyses of a subsample, which included only those participants involved in a current romantic relationship (n = 138), indicate that trust is a significant mediating variable in the association between listening anxiety and verbal aggression. Participants who reflected back on a past relationship reported having less trust than those in a current relationship. These findings are discussed as they relate to the importance of trust in a relationship and how trust is perceived differently in and out of romantic relationships.

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Chapter One:

Introduction and Rationale

Many scholars would argue that Americans and much of Western civilization are especially guarded when it comes to personal well-being, and that there is a cultural drive to be more competitive than cooperative (e.g., O'Neill, 2002; Rotter, 1967). Individuals faced with conflict can either choose to cooperate or compete in order to reach a resolution. Verbal aggression, a communicative act that symbolically hurts or threatens to hurt another person, is clearly competitive and uncooperative communication behavior.

A large body of research has been focused on the study of verbal aggression over the last half century. Communication scholars, especially, have dedicated research to understanding the biological (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997) and environmental (Infante, Wall, Leap & Danielson, 1984) predictors, situational triggers (Wigley, 2010), and subsequent relational outcome management (e.g., Payne & Sabourin, 1990) as it relates to verbal aggression. Thus, verbal aggression remains an area of interest for communication scholars today, because these behaviors continue to exist and cause complications in a variety of communication situations, including sibling relationships (e.g., Collins & Laursen, 1992; Martin, Anderson, & Rocca, 2005; Vandell & Bailey, 1992), romantic dating relationships (e.g., Dailey & Palomares, 2004; Venable & Martin, 1997), and marital relationships (e.g., Payne & Sabourin, 1990; Rancer, Baukus, & Amato, 1986; Stafford & Dainton, 1994).

Often, receivers of information are met with anxiety when listening to others' arguments regarding conflict. Wheeless, Preiss, and Gayle (1997) published a list of responses that was compiled after surveying young adults regarding types of listening and reading that made them feel anxious. Out of the responses generated related to listening anxiety, "don't understand the

topic," "other's opinion opposed to mine," and "teachers who criticize" were among the most frequently reported (Wheeless et al., 1997, pp. 157-158). Listening anxiety has not yet been statistically linked to verbal aggression, but is proposed in the current study to be deserving of further investigation.

Motivation for the current project emerged from the results of one study aimed to further investigate antecedents for trait verbal aggressiveness and trait argumentativeness. Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) focused their study on the two factors of informational reception apprehension (IRA; Wheeless et al., 1997) that are most relevant to interpersonal interaction: intellectual inflexibility (i.e., a general cognitive rigidity when receiving information) and listening anxiety (i.e., a trait like anxiety which leads to difficulty or inability to receive, process, and/or interpret information specifically when listening to another person speaking). Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) found that there is a moderate positive relationship between intellectual inflexibility and listening anxiety combined and trait argumentativeness, but the same combined factor scores only accounted for a negligible 3% of variance in verbal aggressiveness. When examined individually, intellectual inflexibility was shown to have a statistically significant negative relationship with verbal aggression; however, there was no statistically significant relationship between listening anxiety and verbal aggressiveness.

Although Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) did not find a statistically significant relationship between listening anxiety and verbal aggression, they concluded that anxieties associated with information processing do not appear to have a *direct* influence on verbally aggressive behavior. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to identify a variable that may help to explain listening anxiety's *indirect* influence on verbal aggression.

It is the assertion of this study that the use of verbally aggressive tactics in romantic dating relationships is associated with listening anxiety, and that this association can be explained through interpersonal trust. The concept of trust has evolved from a cognitive and generalized concept (Rotter, 1967) to a behavioral and interpersonal concept (Gottman, 2011; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; respectively). However, the consensus of at least six decades of research (e.g., Axelrod, 1984; Bowlby, 1980; Gottman, 2011; Rapoport, 1974; Rapoport & Chammah, 1965; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) is that interpersonal trust is a crucial component of effective relational conflict resolution. The current study, therefore, examines the associations between interpersonal trust, listening anxiety, and the use of verbal aggression, as well as the direct and indirect effects of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression.

Need for Study

With concern for the fact that marriage integrity in the U.S. suffers greatly, and that the divorce rate continues to be quite high (Tejada-Vera & Sutton, 2010), research has been conducted to establish an understanding of possible causes for such phenomena. A national telephone survey (The Fatherhood Initiative, 2005) of 1,503 Americans age 18 or older found that the most common reason given for divorce was lack of commitment (73% of respondents). In order of frequency, other reasons for divorce were too much arguing (56%), infidelity (55%), marrying too young (46%), unrealistic expectations (45%), lack of equality in the relationship (44%), lack of preparation for marriage (41%), and abuse (29%). Participants in this study were able to choose more than one response; therefore percentages equal more than 100%.

As mentioned above, multiple factors have been reported to be the cause of relational failure, with lack of commitment as the most frequently reported predictor. Commitment can be

defined as "having a long-term view of the marriage that helps [people] not get overwhelmed by the problems and challenges day to day. When there is high commitment in a relationship, [people] feel safer and are willing to give more for the relationship to succeed" (Hawkins & Fackrell, 2009, p. 41). Larzelere and Huston (1980) argued that to "feel safe" in a relationship is a major component of interpersonal trust, relevant to the extent that a person believes his or her relational partner to be benevolent and honest. Furthermore, Larzelere and Huston (1980) asserted that trust is a prerequisite to having commitment in a relationship. Using Hawkins and Fackrell's (2009) definition for commitment, it can be extrapolated that interpersonal trust may be a potential link between listening anxiety and verbal aggression.

Interpersonal trust is a component of interpersonal relationships that significantly influences whether or not a relationship can thrive and survive. According to Rotter (1967):

> One of the most salient factors in the effectiveness of our present complex social organization is the willingness of one or more individuals in a social unit to trust others. The efficiency, adjustment, and even survival of any social group depend upon the presence or absence of such trust. (p. 651)

Trust allows individuals to work together without the fear of being harmed by one another. This sort of cooperation is a necessary element in any romantic relationship, and yet relationships seem to suffer a great deal in this respect. When trust is missing, individuals tend to react to the increase in perceived risk of being harmed. Listening anxiety and interpersonal trust are expected to play a part in producing negative communication behaviors, such as verbal aggression.

According to psychologist, John Gottman (1999), whether or not couples react to conflict with negativity (e.g., criticism, contempt, and defensiveness) is an indicator of their chance for

survival. Furthermore, Gottman's cumulative works suggest that conflict management styles in romantic relationships can be counseled and improved (e.g., Gottman, 2011; Gottman, Gottman, & DeClaire, 2007; Gottman & Silver, 1999). Therefore, it must be assumed that if the antecedent factors to verbal aggression, a destructive communicative behavior, are identifiable *and* treatable, then it must be our purpose to endeavor to seek them out and elucidate them for future benefit.

The subsequent chapter provides a review of relevant literature pertaining to verbal aggression, listening anxiety, and interpersonal trust, as well as hypotheses. Chapter Three details a methodology that was used to test the hypotheses for this research. Chapter Four outlines the preliminary results of this study and a series of post hoc analyses. Chapter Five interprets the results in a discussion about the implications of the study. Limitations of the current study are also provided. Finally, appendices, including tables and figures, the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence (HSCL) application and number for project approval, and contents of the survey for this study, are also presented at the end of this document.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Verbal Aggression

It has been argued that verbal aggression is one of the most important areas needing communication research because of its extremely destructive nature (Infante, 1994). Verbal aggression is a personality trait that "predisposes persons to attack the self-concepts of other people instead of, or in addition to, their positions on topics of communication" (Infante & Wigley, 1986, p. 61). The use of verbal aggression in lieu of, or in addition to, constructive communication regarding any topic, ostensibly veers the communicators into a divergent topic, often resulting in many negative feelings and consequences. In their research, Infante and Wigley (1986) identified several commonly used forms of verbally aggressive messages: profanity, threats, and attacks on background, competence, character, or physical appearance. Often, individuals find themselves obligated to defend the attacks of their aggressive counterparts rather than focus on the issue at hand. The manifestations of this aggressive and arguably unproductive trait are present in, although not limited to, sibling relationships (e.g., Collins & Laursen, 1992; Martin et al., 2005; Vandell & Bailey, 1992), romantic dating relationships (e.g., Dailey & Palomares, 2004; Venable & Martin, 1997), and marital relationships (e.g., Payne & Sabourin, 1990; Rancer et al., 1986; Stafford & Dainton, 1994). The most devastating outcome of verbally aggressive behavior is when it results in physical violence (e.g., Hoffman, 1984; Infante, Chandler, & Rudd, 1989; Straus, 1974; Walker, 1979). The current study aims to look at some of the antecedent factors determining the use of verbal aggression in interpersonal romantic relationship conflict.

According to previous studies regarding conflict in romantic relationships, researchers have found that elevated levels of motivation and trait argumentativeness (i.e., the ability to form

rational arguments to defend one's position) are positively regarded as producing effective and not verbally aggressive social behaviors (Onyekwere, Rubin, & Infante, 1991). Moreover, Infante (1987, 1988) proposed the argumentative skill deficiency model (ASDM) of verbal aggression, wherein individuals who possess poor argumentative skills are more likely to produce verbally aggressive messages in conflict situations. To test the ASDM, Infante et al. (1989) conducted a study to examine the relationship between argumentative skill deficiency and interspousal violence. The results of their study supported the hypothesis that individuals in violent marriages would be less argumentative than those in non-violent marriages. Their findings also revealed that self-reported trait argumentativeness was lower for both men and women in violent marriages. Additionally, for men and women in violent marriages, perceived partner trait verbal aggressiveness was higher. Infante et al. (1989) conjectured that when faced with the need to defend their self-concept, partners' inability to invent effective lines of argument would produce greater amounts of verbal aggression leading to physically violent episodes. Thus, these findings suggest that "violent couples are not able to talk through issues" (Infante et al., 1989, p. 174).

In another study involving 274 university students, Infante, Myers, and Buerkel (1994) asked participants to describe either constructive or destructive family disagreements (i.e., those with positive or negative outcomes, respectively). Their results revealed strong statistical support for the hypothesis that predicted more argumentative patterns would emerge in constructive disagreements, whereas more verbally aggressive patterns would be observed in destructive disagreements.

The implications of previous research further advance the current study's proposition that communicative skill, perceived competence, and ability all factor into communication success.

More importantly, the absence or deficit of these dimensions produces communication apprehension and much communication difficulty.

Listening Anxiety as a Factor of Informational Reception Apprehension

Based on the concept of receiver apprehension (RA; Wheeless, 1975), informational reception apprehension (IRA) adds a threshold that, when crossed, causes a host of difficult effects limiting an individual's ability to participate in communicative situations (Wheeless et al., 1997). Wheeless et al. (1997) surveyed college students to learn more about what types of circumstances influence informational receptivity and apprehension. The student responses offered a new perspective, which helped the researchers to reevaluate RA. As a result, they were compelled to modify the trait's conceptualization and rename it IRA. They found that much like RA, IRA represents an individual's limitations for processing, interpreting, and adapting to information in their environment, and the apprehension is derived from the receiver's perception of their personal inability to effectively process this information. However, their findings indicated that IRA adds a nuanced perspective to the aspects that may increase receiver apprehension, produce overly simple cognitive processing, and result in more rigid and limiting behavioral outcomes. Thus, Wheeless and his colleagues determined these aspects (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) to be at the root of the anxiety during information reception. Further still, they identified three cognitive dimensions: complexity, abstraction, and flexibility.

Wheeless et al. (1997) designed the Informational Reception Apprehension Test (IRAT) to measure the perceptions of these dimensions through two information reception points (listening and reading) and through one cognitive process (intellectual inflexibility). In a study that examined antecedents for trait argumentativeness and trait verbal aggressiveness, Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) sought to isolate IRA factors, intellectual inflexibility and listening anxiety.

They did this because they are the two factors of IRA that are closely related to interpersonal communication, whereas reading anxiety is not typically an interpersonal phenomenon. Citing extant literature (Applegate, 1982; Neer, 1994), Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) argued that "the more differentiated, integrated, permeable, and abstract one's construct system, the better an individual will be at adapting effective persuasive messages" (pp. 57-58). Attempting to find correlates between IRA (a trait constraining one's construct system) and verbal aggressiveness (ineffective and often hurtful messages), they found that intellectual inflexibility and verbally aggressive behavior were positively related, whereas there was no statistical significance in the relationship between listening anxiety and verbal aggression.

The current study attempts to reexamine the relationship between listening anxiety and verbal aggression. Schrodt and Wheeless' (2001) reasoning is too compelling to reject the relationship based on only one test of its veracity. Instead, the current study proposes that what may be missing from previous analyses is a mediating variable.

Interpersonal Trust

Julian Rotter (1967) defined interpersonal trust as "an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon" (p. 651). The idea that trust is a belief of dependency or reliability is commonly observed. For example, many individuals trust that a close friend will return the book that they borrowed and find it difficult to trust that politicians will follow through with their campaign promises. Rotter's (1967) perspective uses a cognitive definition of trust, wherein the promises of another person are *thought* to be believable and is taken to be a definition of generalized trust.

Larzelere and Huston (1980), through correlational analysis, found that generalized trust and interpersonal (dyadic) trust are not overlapping and therefore are discrete categories. In this

vein, and for the purpose of this study, another definition of trust is more appropriate. Gottman (2011) conceptualized interpersonal trust as being able to count on one's partner to look out for one's interests, frequently in situations where the partner's own interests are at stake. This is a behavioral definition of trust, because the expectation is predicting how a partner will *behave*. His perspective on interpersonal trust is based on the idea that there are variations in trust with each and every interaction shared between dyads, and that without cooperation or consideration of the other, one's actions can have harmful effects on the trust that each person feels for his or her partner. Gottman's definition of trust stems from four predominant theoretical influences (i.e., interdependence theory, investment model, game theory, and attachment theory; see Gottman, 2011, for a more detailed review) that will be briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) interdependence theory places trust at the foundation of commitment levels, the level of investment of each partner, and the overall stability of the relationship. Interdependence of couples, then, is fundamental to how much a person is concerned about the welfare of his or her partner due to the fact that partner welfare influences not only relationship welfare but the welfare of the person him- or herself. Second, Rusbult's investment model (Rusbult et al., 1986) gives a perspective on how couples' health and success depends upon how individual partners respond to conflict with constructive problem-solving responses (i.e., voice and loyalty) or destructive problem-solving responses (exit and neglect). Third, Anatol Rapoport (1965, 1974) and Robert Axelrod's (1984) works on two-person game theory, also known as the "Prisoner's Dilemma," describe the mathematical predictability of the outcomes of strategies in two person conflict. Rapoport and Axelrod's works demonstrate that

when individuals involved in conflict are only concerned with their own well-being, the consequences of selfish strategies are executed at the expense of the other (a zero-sum game).

Finally, Bowlby (1980) and Johnson's (2008) uses of attachment theory have influenced Gottman's (2011) concept of trust in two ways. Not only has attachment theory made trust one of its foundational prerequisites for healthy psychological development, it can also inform counseling and support for people who have a history of hurtful interpersonal interactions. Bowlby's (1980) work concerning loss was largely focused on individuals who have negative models of self and are in need of therapeutic reappraisal, yet who have processing limitations as a result of old patterns of thought. Furthermore, Johnson, in her 2008 book, *Hold Me Tight*, describes how being able to depend on the loving connection of a partner contributes directly to one's ability to tolerate the tumult of life. She observes that while everyone experiences some fear during relational conflict, individuals with secure bonds are able to recognize that there are no real threats and their partners will reassure them. She also argues that the strength of the bond is the very foundation of a relationship's successes and failures. Johnson's (2008) work, directly influenced by John Bowlby's body of research, was dedicated to understanding the nature of love and how couples in conflict can heal and repair, returning again to the ability to experience the pleasures of their relationships.

It can be argued that within interpersonal relationships, there are significant levels of risk regarding psychological, emotional, and physical well-being. Competition would have us eschew any and all risks in an effort of self-preservation. In order to receive the benefits of a romantic relationship, however, one must accept these risks as part and parcel. To accept these risks, one must also have a certain level of trust. According to conflict mediation expert Gary Furlong and his dynamics of trust model (DTM; 2005), "The level of trust we have in the

situation or the people affects the size of the risk we'll take and how frequently we'll take those risks" (p. 129). Although not directly influenced by Gottman's 40 years of laboratory research, Furlong's work in conflict mediation echoes the same ideas. He observes from mediation experience that the motives and intentions of our romantic partners are often unseen, implied, or assumed. Individuals, based on the behaviors of others, can only make inferences in an attempt to know what the motives and intentions *might* be. If a romantic partner is trustworthy, it is often assumed that he or she does not have bad intentions and will be concerned with the well-being of the other. Inferring good intentions from a partner's behavior would indicate that said partner is not selfishly motivated and will not purposefully harm the other for personal benefit. Gottman's (2011) insightful comparison of conflict in romantic relationships to the conflict outcome predictable through game theory suggests that "we usually assume that our opponent wishes to win, which probably means the opponent seeks to *minimize* our payoff and *maximize* his or her payoff" (emphasis added; p. 51).

Unfortunately, anecdotal evidence shows that "minimized payoffs" or hurtful outcomes are often present in interpersonal relationships. Moreover, research on harmful communication in romantic relationships shows that there is a positive relationship between one's feelings of being hurt and the perception of one's partner's intention to inflict harm through the use of verbal aggression (McLaren & Solomon, 2006; Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, & Alexander, 2005). Similarly, Gottman (2011) used a trust metric to reanalyze large amounts of data collected while studying heterosexual married couples and found that when husbands trust wives, there is significantly less physiological arousal during marital conflict. Analyzing the same data set, Gottman (2011) also found that wives report receiving significantly less verbal

aggression during conflict when they trust their husbands. It must be noted that trust in one's partner indicates a *perception* of good intentions and not necessarily evidence of such.

It can be argued that individuals involved in romantic conflict cannot always be seen as having perceived their partner's intentions accurately. Fundamental attribution error (Heider, 1958) may help to explain this in part. Heider (1958) saw that individuals have a tendency to attribute the negative actions of others to their dispositional character flaws, whereas they tend to attribute their own negative actions to situational causes and not to their own personality traits or dispositional characteristics. Thus, while a relational partner may act negatively in response to circumstances, it can be falsely perceived as a purposeful mistreatment driven by malicious intentions or innate character flaws. Another explanation for misperceived intentions may be provided through Weiss' (1980) concept of sentiment override.

Sentiment override (Weiss, 1980) can be positive or negative, and it suggests that an individual's reaction to interactions (including verbal messages) will be filtered through the existing sentiment (i.e., positive sentiment will lead to perception of positive messages/interactions and negative sentiment will lead to perception of negative messages/interactions). For example, it is not uncommon for one romantic partner to say to the other something like, "Fabrics with elastic should be air-dried, not dried in the electric dryer." If the partner receiving the message has negative override, then whether the message was sent with a positive, neutral, or negative tone, the negative sentiment will move the receiving partner to perceive the message as negative. Gottman (2011) asserts that when a partner has negative override, a downward spiral begins; perceived negativity begets more negativity. Gottman (2011) refers to this as the absorbing state, because it is easy to get into and very difficult to get out; it absorbs us.

The current study presumes that listening anxiety may lead to situations similar to the absorbing state, because listening anxiety causes ineffective processing and subsequent misinterpretation of, or inability to adapt to, information. It is therefore argued that trust in romantic relationships would foster more cooperative interactions, reduce misperception of intentions, and allow for positive exchanges of communication to occur. The goal of introducing trust to relationships lacking thereof would be to further encourage a productive means whereby arguments can be executed productively and conflict can be resolved without harm to either party. Consequently, the role of interpersonal trust in the relationship between listening anxiety and the use of verbal aggression is examined. Based on the preceding literature, the following hypotheses were assessed:

H1: There is a negative relationship between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust within romantic dyads.

H2: There is a negative relationship between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression within romantic dyads.

H3: Listening anxiety will have an indirect effect on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust.

Chapter Three:

Method

This project, and its relevant procedures, was approved by the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence (HSCL). See Appendix A for a complete copy of the HSCL application.

Sample

A convenience sample of 363 students currently enrolled in classes within the Department of Communication Studies was utilized in this study. Forty-four participants were removed due to incomplete surveys. Before testing hypotheses, two efforts were made in order to eliminate potential confounding variables. First, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the association between participant age (one sample was all inclusive, and the other sample had only 18 to 22 year old participants) and all study measures. Results indicated there was no significant difference between age groups (see Table 1), however participants who were 23 years or older were removed (n = 12) to increase the homogeneity of the sample; also included in this group were those who reported a relationship status that was either married (n = 8) or separated (n = 1), again to increase the sample's representative strength. Second, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the different effect that relationship duration (one group included relationships less than one year, and the other included relationships greater than one year) might have on the study measures. The results of the independent samples t-test showed no significant difference between groups (see Table 2); therefore, all lengths of relationship duration were retained for the final sample.

The final sample of 298 participants included 115 male and 183 females, ranging in age from 18 to 22 (15 provided no report of age), with a mean age of 19.2 (SD = 1.11). Participants were asked if they were "currently in a romantic relationship," to which 138 responded 'Yes,'

and 160 responded 'No.' Participants who responded 'No' to the question were asked to reflect back on a previous relationship. Of those who reported being in a current romantic relationship, 90.6% (n = 125) reported their status to be 'dating,' while 9.4% (n = 13) reported that they were living with their romantic partner. Length of relationships were reported incrementally and included 0 to 3 months (18.8%), 3 to 6 months (20.3%), 6 months to 1 year (16.7%), 1 to 5 years (41.3%), and 5 years or more (2.9%).

Procedure

The opportunity to participate in this study was an email message that included a URL link, which took participants directly to the online survey. The email was sent to all basic course students and some additional communication studies courses in the department. Once each student read the survey information statement (Appendix B), which described the purpose of the research and explained how the information would be used, the student could then agree to participate and enter the site. Participants completed three total measurements: the first measured verbal aggressiveness (Appendix C), the second measured interpersonal trust (Appendix D), and the third measured listening anxiety (Appendix E). In addition, all participants answered a section of demographic questions (Appendix F). Upon completion, students received a "receipt" for participation (Appendix G), which would be used to receive class credit for optional research participation.

Measures

Verbal Aggression. Infante's (1986) Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAS) was utilized to measure participants' perceived use of verbal aggression. This instrument includes 20 Likert-type items (1-5 scale, with 1 = *almost never true* and 5 = *almost always true*) asking participants to reflect on how they engage in conflict with other people. Sample items from the VAS include,

"When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them" [reverse scored] and "When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior." A high score represents frequent use of verbal aggression. Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) found the VAS to have good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .84. In the current study, the VAS had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85.

Interpersonal Trust. The Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS; Larzelere & Huston, 1980) was utilized in this study. The instrument includes 8 Likert-type items (1-7 scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*), which measure the level of trust one has with a romantic relationship partner, current or most recent. Sample items from the DTS include, "My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare" [reverse scored] and "I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me." A high score on the DTS demonstrates high levels of interpersonal trust. Larzelere and Huston (1980) found the DTS to be highly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93. In the current study, the DTS had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89.

Listening Anxiety. The Informational Reception Apprehension Test for Listening (IRAT-L; Wheeless, et al., 1997) was utilized in this study. The trait-like measure includes 13 Likert-type items (1-5 scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*) designed to assess listening anxiety. Sample items from the IRAT-L include, "It is frustrating to listen to people discuss practical problems in philosophical and abstract ways" and "When I listen to complicated information, I often fear that I will misinterpret it." Schrodt and Wheeless (2001) found the IRAT-L to have good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89. In the current study, the IRAT-L had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed on an aggregate level using IBM SPSS 20. To test the first and second hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were obtained. Hypothesis one predicted that there would be a negative relationship between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust within romantic dyads; therefore *r* values were expected to be negative. Mean scores for listening anxiety were expected to decrease as mean scores for interpersonal trust increased, and vice versa. Hypothesis two predicted that there would be a negative relationship between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression within romantic dyads; therefore *r* values were expected to be negative. Mean scores for interpersonal trust were expected to decrease as mean scores for verbal aggression increased, and vice versa.

Hypothesis three predicted that listening anxiety would have an indirect effect on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. To test the third hypothesis, a bootstrapped mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was utilized to investigate the indirect effect of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. Bootstrapping generates random samples obtained from the original data (in this analysis, 5,000 sets). For each random sample, the mediated effects were computed. The distribution of these effects was then used to achieve confidence intervals at 95% to indicate the size of the indirect effect of interpersonal trust. The confidence intervals (not including zero), then, were used to determine if the indirect effect was statistically significant.

Preacher and Kelley (2011) recommend the use of a standardized effect size that is not sensitive to sample sizes (kappa-squared; κ^2). κ^2 is the proportion of the size of the indirect effect relative to the maximum possible indirect effect. Although Preacher and Kelley (2011) argue

that a small effect size does not denote low importance, nor does an important effect size need to be large, they nonetheless compare evaluations of κ^2 to Cohen's (1988) guidelines for estimates of size for squared correlation coefficients. Values of .01, .09, and .25, therefore, are labeled as small, medium, and large, respectively.

Chapter Four:

Results

Means and standard deviations for all study measures can be found in Table 3. For the first and second hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationships between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust (H1) and between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression (H2). There was a significant negative correlation between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust (r = -.13, N = 298, p < .05). This suggests that interpersonal trust decreases when listening anxiety increases, and vice versa. There was also a significant negative correlation between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression (r = -.12, N = 298, p < .05). This indicates that the use of verbal aggression increases when interpersonal trust decreases, and vice versa. Thus, the first two hypotheses were supported.

The third hypothesis predicted that listening anxiety would have had an indirect effect on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. The test of indirect effects did not support the third hypothesis (β = .01, Bootstrap 95% confidence interval -.00, .03; see Figure 1). Listening anxiety failed to have a significant indirect effect on the use of verbal aggression through levels of interpersonal trust, despite the fact that listening anxiety had a significant effect on interpersonal trust (a = .21, SE = .09, p < .05) and the total effect of all variables was significant (c = .08, SE = .04, p < .05).

However, after reviewing the data set, there were intriguing differences in the mean scores for interpersonal trust between two nearly equal groups that emerged from the study: participants who responded ‘Yes’ (n = 138; M = 5.52, SD = 1.03) and participants who responded ‘No’ (n = 160; M = 4.45, SD = 1.17) to the question, “Are you currently in a romantic

relationship?" In order to investigate the potential significance of these differences, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted, expecting that a significant difference in the mean scores for interpersonal trust, the proposed mediator variable, would result in notable changes for all three hypotheses. The results of the independent samples *t*-test confirmed expectations of significant differences between groups, $t\ (296) = 8.24$, $p < .001$. Consequently, all three hypotheses were retested on the subsample ($n = 138$) in post hoc analyses. Means and standard deviations for all test variables in the subsample can be found in Table 4.

To retest the first and second hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed again to assess the potential increase of strength in significance for relationships between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust (H1) and between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression (H2). There was an increase in strength for both the negative correlations between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust (from $r = -.13$, $n = 298$, $p < .05$ to $r = -.19$, $n = 138$, $p < .05$) and between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression (from $r = -.12$, $n = 298$, $p < .05$ to $r = -.32$, $n = 138$, $p < .001$). Using Fisher's r to z transformation, the difference in *r* value strength for each association was tested. There was no significant change in the strength of association between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust. However, the change in strength of association between interpersonal trust and verbal aggression was significant, $z = 2.03$, $p < .05$. Therefore, the association between interpersonal trust and verbal aggression was significantly stronger for individuals in a current romantic relationship than it was for all individuals, those in a current relationship, and those reflecting back on a previous relationship combined.

To retest the third hypothesis, a bootstrapped mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was again utilized. The test of indirect effects

confirmed that listening anxiety did, in fact, have a significant indirect effect, $\beta = .04$, $\kappa^2 = 0.08$, on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust (Bootstrap 95% confidence interval .01, .08; see Figure 2). This indicates that when listening anxiety increases, the use of verbal aggression increases through a decrease in interpersonal trust. Likewise, when listening anxiety decreases, the use of verbal aggression decreases through an increase in interpersonal trust. The value of κ^2 indicates that the effect size for this association is small yet approaching medium.

Chapter Five:

Discussion

The overarching goal of this study was to offer a response to Schrodt and Wheeless' (2001) conclusion that listening anxiety is not directly related to the use of verbal aggression by reexamining the relationship of these variables with the inclusion of a mediator variable, interpersonal trust. This was accomplished by investigating the relationships between all three variables (i.e., listening anxiety, interpersonal trust, and the use of verbal aggression). The first hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between listening anxiety and interpersonal trust within romantic dyads. This hypothesis received support. Results indicated that listening anxiety has a small negative association with interpersonal trust. Similarly, the second hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression within romantic dyads. This hypothesis also received support. Results indicated that interpersonal trust has a small negative association with the use of verbal aggression. The third hypothesis predicted that listening anxiety has an indirect effect on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. This hypothesis was not supported.

Post hoc analysis of the total data set ($N = 298$) revealed that individuals who reported being currently involved in a romantic relationship ($n = 138$) also reported significantly higher interpersonal trust than individuals not in a current relationship ($n = 160$). This difference prompted further examination of this subset of data. When the first hypothesis was tested again, it received slightly stronger support, indicating that listening anxiety persists to have a small negative association with interpersonal trust. However, when the second hypothesis was retested with the data subset, post hoc analysis revealed a significant change in the size of the association between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression. The results indicated that the

negative association between trust and aggression is significantly larger with individuals who reported being currently in a romantic relationship compared to those who are merely reflecting back to a previous relationship. Post hoc analysis of the third hypothesis also revealed that there is, in fact, a moderate indirect effect of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust. The third hypothesis was supported. Results indicated that individuals currently in a romantic relationship experience a decrease in the use of verbal aggression when there is an increase in interpersonal trust and a decrease in listening anxiety. Likewise, individuals currently involved in a romantic relationship experience an increase in the use of verbal aggression when there is a decrease in interpersonal trust and an increase in listening anxiety. These findings support the overall goal of this study but introduce some additional issues worthy of discussion.

Implications of Research

Clearly, individuals with current romantic relationships have a greater sense of trust in their partners than individuals who are not currently in a relationship and can only reflect on a partner in the past. There could be many explanations for this, but one reason may be simply that individuals who reflect back to a past relationship to answer survey questions are primed to view that relationship as having failed. Several reasons of relational failure may be related to low, lacking, or even blatant violations of trust (e.g., low dependability, selfishness, and cheating). Although not all current relationships are successful or absent of trust violations, this would at least explain how one group is more prone to perceptions of decreased trust than the other.

The overall findings confirm that all three variables are associated and have both theoretical and practical implications. First, the negative relationship between listening anxiety

and interpersonal trust could be explained by cognitive conditioning in the formative years. Ledbetter and Schrodt's (2008) study on family communication patterns and cognitive processing revealed that informational reception apprehension (IRA) is positively associated with conformity orientation in the family of origin. This communication pattern encourages homogeneity and hierarchy within the family and discourages open questioning of the norms and rules. Specifically, their results indicated that conformity orientation has a significant positive relationship with listening anxiety. Part of the closeness garnered from strong interpersonal trust is the ability to talk openly with an intimate partner. Perhaps, individuals with listening anxiety have been conditioned to view openness in relationships as a non-normative behavior.

Second, the negative relationship between interpersonal trust and the use of verbal aggression can be interpreted as resulting from a sense of competition and not cooperation in a relationship. There may be many theories implicated here; however attachment theory is a strong one to give focus. Johnson (2008) assigns great importance to the loving connection (trust) of a partner, and suggests that it is at the foundation of a relationship's success or failure. One's ability to tolerate the ups and downs of a relationship depends on trust, and it also influences one's ability to successfully navigate through a conflict. Johnson's (2008) observation was that while everyone experiences some fear during relational conflict, individuals with insecure bonds (i.e., low or lacking trust) cannot recognize that threats in a conflict are not real and lasting, and they do not believe that their partners will have their best interests in mind. Thus, conflict escalates as a result of self-preservation. If trust were present, self-preservation would not be a factor, because the loving connection would lead to cooperative behaviors.

Finally, the indirect effect of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression through interpersonal trust suggests that a decrease in trust only exacerbates any existing problems with

anxiety. That a person is processing information poorly, or perceives so much, is already going to have a negative effect on the way in which conflict is managed. Gottman's (2011) concept of the absorbing state helps to explicate this chain of events. For unhappy couples, the absorbing state is easy to enter, but difficult to exit. This state is characterized by nasty communication that receives nasty retaliatory reactions; Gottman calls this the "negative-affect exchange" or "nasty-nasty exchange" (pp. 66-68). Through his research, he discovered that happy couples can find themselves in a nasty-nasty exchange, but they are able to move on from it effectively. Unhappy couples, however, find themselves in negative-affect exchanges more frequently and get stuck in the state, unable to repair it. Gottman (2011) argues that Weiss' (1980) concept of sentiment override may explain why unhappy couples have such a hard time exiting the absorbing state.

Gottman (2011) suggests that negative sentiment override may occur because a partner is "running on empty," which indicates a feeling of lacking reciprocity, feeling unloved, feeling unappreciated, and so on. There is also evidence to support the claim that sentiment override is associated with a partner's sense of trust. Gottman (2011) asserts that when a person is "running on empty," trust begins to chip away. He argues that this erosion of trust is what leads to negative sentiment override, because that person begins to feel like their partner is an adversary and not a friend. Again, competition and not cooperation is at the root of the problem. If a person perceives his or her partner as an adversary, there is little one can do to make them cease and desist all efforts of self-defense. It requires trust of that partner not to harm the other before cooperation can move the pair safely out of danger.

It has not yet been tested if negative sentiment override is associated with a person's sense of receiver apprehension, yet listening anxiety and sentiment override are very similar.

Listening anxiety is a trait of being anxious when receiving information through listening. The information received does not need to be complex in order for it to have a deleterious effect. What is important to note is that the receiver of information perceives him- or herself as being unable to process or unable to adapt to the information. Negative override may be very similar to trait listening anxiety in the sense that an individual with either will be agitated by any and all information that requires adaptation and processing, but dissimilar because negative sentiment override is very much a state and not a trait. Listening anxiety, as a trait, is present across a variety of situations (e.g., classroom lectures, disagreements, when being persuaded), whereas sentiment override is a state that comes and goes as often as a person's positive emotional state ebbs and flows.

Practical implications that emerge from the current study's findings echo the efforts of psychologists (e.g., John Gottman, Sue Johnson, and countless others) who endeavor to alter behavior that is seemingly hardwired from infancy. Listening anxiety is perhaps one trait that receives little attention in the psychologist's office, yet may need to take a center stage when aggressive behaviors are present. Gottman's (2011) work on trust indicates that attunement to one's partner is a learnable skill that could be taught not only in the office of a counseling professional but also in the classroom under the auspices of mindfulness seminars. Interestingly, Gottman's (2011) concept of attunement asserts that trust can be developed by teaching partners to *listen* to one another, and show attention and empathy to the needs and desires of the other. If listening is a part of developing trust and trust can influence positive communication behaviors, then it is imperative that scholars and practitioners work together to create ways in which the public sphere helps to educate individuals. Although these are some very intriguing ideas, the

current study was unable to address them all and its limitations should be taken into consideration for those that were addressed.

Limitations of Study

The current study was limited by the sample and sample size. Unfortunately, the revelation of increased trust for individuals in a current relationship was a post hoc occurrence, causing the subsample to be below the target size. In addition, the sample for this study, being drawn from university undergraduates, prevents the findings from being generalizable to the greater population. However, Harned (2001) found that between 82% and 87% of college students reported at least one experience of psychological abuse in a dating relationship and Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, and González (2007) found 93% to 98% of adolescents and young adults reported using or being on the receiving end of verbal aggression. These statistics suggest that the use of verbal aggression is not only a problem for older adults and may actually justify using a focused perspective to explore the nature of verbal aggression in this younger demographic.

Directions for Future Research

Future research is needed to better understand the causes of verbally aggressive communication. Anxiety is on the rise in our contemporary culture. As of 2006, it was reported that anxiety disorders affect 18.7% of adults; that is more than depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia combined (NIMH). Thus, it would not be unreasonable to assume that if anxiety disorders are prevalent and growing, then trait listening anxiety may also be more problematic in the future. As it was the goal of this study to respond to the assertion that listening anxiety and the use of verbal aggression are not directly related, the researcher for this study presumed that a direct relationship would not be found between the two variables. However, results of Pearson

correlations did reveal a significant positive association ($n = 138$, $r = .28$, $p < .001$). This finding, among other aspects of the current study, suggests strongly that future research needs to explore the relationship between listening anxiety and the use of verbal aggression.

Ledbetter and Schrodt (2008) found that family communication patterns are associated with informational reception apprehension (IRA). Specifically, they found that conversation orientations are negatively associated with listening anxiety and intellectual inflexibility. Researchers could do more to understand the relationship between family communication patterns and IRA. If successful, then perhaps family planning and family counseling could help to intervene, before young adults turn to the use of destructive communication behaviors, such as verbal aggression, to cope with their inability to process information without anxiety.

Gottman (2011) asserts that trust can be fostered through attunement. Attunement indicates that individuals can build trust through deliberate efforts to listen and understand their partner's needs and feelings. Future studies should continue to examine relationships in laboratory settings to more closely examine these interactions and potential trust buildings methods. Also, future research should look at *both* partners in a matched pair study, where each partner reports his or her perception of partner trust *and* self-reported intentions of being trustworthy. This design would allow for research to assess perceived intentions versus true intentions of the partner.

Future studies should also investigate the meaning of trust to the individual. It is clear that the worlds of conflict mediation and marital counseling have the same ideas when it comes to the importance of trust. However, perhaps a study involving multiple universities in different regions asking respondents to define trust in their own words would reveal nuances in how people understand trust. Such a large-scale qualitative study might illuminate a more complex

understanding and even the potential that different groups of people expect different types of reliability from their partners. Also, there seems to be an arguable connection between negative sentiment override, listening anxiety, and trust. Future studies could help flesh out this association to determine its place in the prevention of verbally aggressive behavior.

Conclusion

It should be a goal of communication scholars to continue to strive to understand the associations between listening anxiety, interpersonal trust, and the use of verbal aggression. Anxieties and aggression need not lead to failed romance or loss of loving. All people should have the opportunity to enjoy the comfort of strong loving bonds with romantic partners, so that the conflicts that occur can be overcome. Interpersonal trust ought to be seen as a learnable, repairable, and nothing less than fundamental to all relationships' successes and failures. The very existence of positive communication in romantic relationships depends on the ability of scholars and counseling practitioners alike to recognize the important role of trusting one's partner in the improvement of conflict resolution.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1

Zero Order Correlations of Age Samples and Study Measures

Study Measures	All Ages (N = 315)	Ages 18 -22 (N = 298)	Fisher's r to z
Listening Anxiety	-.11	-.17**	.75
Interpersonal Trust	.03	.03	0
Verbal Aggression	-.06	.01	-.86

Note. ** $p < .001$

Table 2

Independent Samples T-tests of Relationship Duration and Study Measures

Study Measures	Less than 1 year (n = 77) M (SD)	Greater than 1 year (n = 61) M (SD)	t
Listening Anxiety	2.77 (.82)	2.84 (.74)	-.52
Interpersonal Trust	5.46 (1.04)	5.59 (1.03)	-.76
Verbal Aggression	2.38 (.49)	2.39 (.53)	-.18

Table 3

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Study Measures (N = 298).

Study Measures	1	2	3
1. Listening Anxiety	---	-.13*	.12*
2. Interpersonal Trust	---	---	-.12*
3. Verbal Aggression	---	---	---
M (SD)	2.82 (.75)	4.95 (1.23)	2.36 (.49)

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 4

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Study Measures (n = 138).

	1	2	3
1.Listening Anxiety	---	-.19*	.28**
2.Interpersonal Trust	---	---	-.32**
3.Verbal Aggression	---	---	---
M (SD)	2.80 (.78)	5.52 (1.03)	2.39 (.51)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

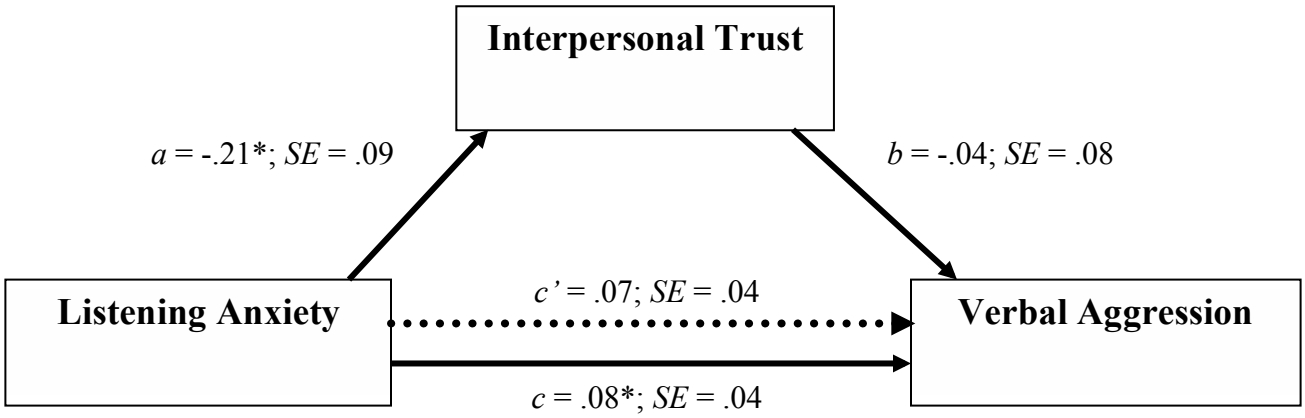

Figure 1. Path coefficients for simple mediation analysis on the indirect effect of interpersonal trust on the relationship between listening anxiety and the use of verbal aggression ($N = 298$). *Note:* Dotted line represents the effect of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression when interpersonal trust is not included as a mediator variable. * $p < .05$

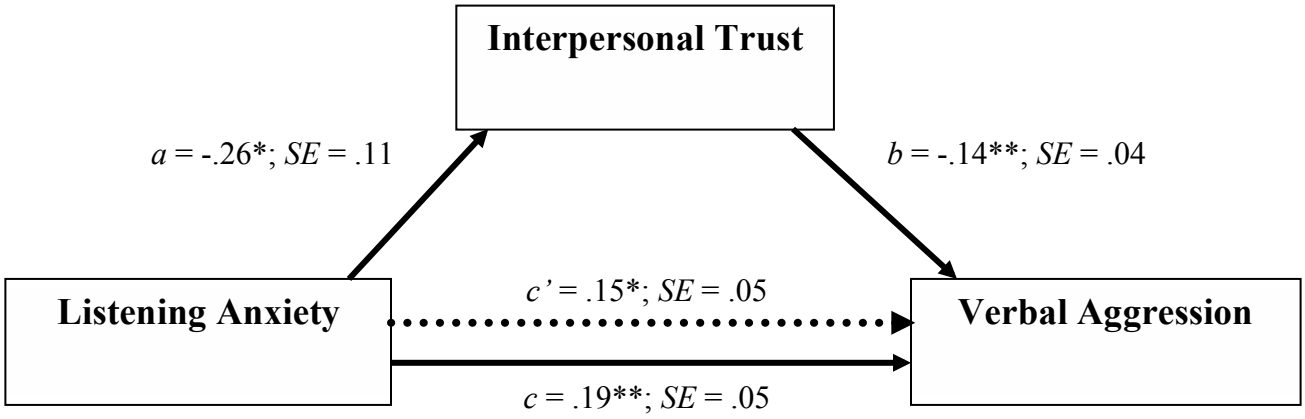

Figure 2. Path coefficients for simple mediation analysis on the indirect effect of interpersonal trust on the relationship between listening anxiety and the use of verbal aggression (n = 138). *Note:* Dotted line represents the effect of listening anxiety on the use of verbal aggression when interpersonal trust is not included as a mediator variable. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Appendix A: HSCL Application

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Human Subjects Committee Lawrence

Application for Project Approval

1. Name of Investigator(s) Natalie S. Hoskins
2. Department Affiliation Communication Studies
3. Campus or Home Mailing Address: Bailey Hall, 1440 Jayhawk Blvd., Room 102

a. Email address:nataliehoskins@ku.edu

Phone Number(s): (a) Campus:785-864-9884 (b) Home 913-206-7358

5. Name of Faculty Member Responsible for Project: Dr. Adrianne Kunkel

HSCL must receive faculty approval via email notification or hard copy signature before a student application may be processed.

a. Email address of Faculty Member: adkunkel@ku.edu

6. Type of investigator and nature of activity. (Check appropriate categories)

☐ Faculty or staff of University of Kansas

☐ Project to be submitted for extramural funding; Agency:_____

KU/KUCR project number:_____

(HSCL must compare <u>all</u> protocols in grant applications with the protocols in the corresponding HSCL application)

☐ Project to be submitted for intramural funding; Source: _____

☐ Project unfunded

☐ Other: _____

☒ Student at University of Kansas: ☒ Graduate ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Special

☐ Class project (number & title of class): _____

☐ Independent study (name of faculty supervisor): _____

☐ Other (please explain): _____

☐ Investigators not from the Lawrence campus but using subjects obtained through the University of Kansas

☐ Activity to be registered with clinical trials.gov (when registered, notify HSCL of registration number)

7.a. Title of investigation: Listening Anxiety and Verbal Aggression Moderated by Interpersonal Trust

7.b. Title of sponsored project, if different from above: _____

8. Individuals other than faculty, staff, or students at Kansas University.
Please identify investigators and research group: _____

9. Certifications: By submitting this application via email or hard copy I am certifying that I have read, understand, and will comply with the policies and procedures of the University of Kansas regarding human subjects in research. I subscribe to the standards and will adhere to the policies and procedures of the HSCL, and I am familiar with the published guidelines for the ethical treatment of subjects associated with my particular field of study. I also certify that I have verified and disclosed any potential conflict of interest between myself and/or my team members and the project sponsor (if applicable). **Type or write name(s) in the signature lines below depending on your electronic or hard copy submission.**

Date: 12/14/2012 Date: 12/14/2012

Name: Natalie S. Hoskins_____ Name: Dr. Adrianne Kunkel_____

First Investigator: Natalie S. Hoskins

Project Title: Listening Anxiety and Verbal Aggression Moderated by Interpersonal Trust

10. Please answer "Yes" or "No" for the following questions about the proposed research activity. (Provide details about questions checked "Yes" on the last page of the application.)

Does the research involve:

no a. drugs or other controlled substances?

no b. payment of subjects for participation?

no c. access to subjects through a cooperating institution (other than KU)?

no d. substances taken internally by or applied externally to the subjects?

no e. mechanical or electrical devices (e.g., electrodes) applied to the subjects?

no f. collection of fluids (e.g., blood, urine, etc.) or tissues from subjects or exposure of subjects to hazardous materials (chemical, biological, radiation, etc.)?
Environment Health & Safety (EHS) Approval number (required):

no g. subjects experiencing stress (physiological or psychological)?

no h. omission of information concerning any aspect of purposes or procedures (misleading or withheld information)?

no i. deception of subjects (active misinformation or false feedback provided)?

no j. subjects who could be judged to have limited freedom of consent (e.g., minors, developmentally delayed persons, or those institutionalized)?

no k. any procedure or activities that might place the subjects at risk (psychological, physical, or social)?

yes l. use of ☐ participant observation ☐interviews, ☐focus groups, ☒questionnaires, ☐audio or ☐video recordings? (check all that apply)

no m. data collection over a period greater than one year?

yes n. indicate the consent procedure(s) to be used ☐signed, ☐oral, ☒information statement, ☐ parent/guardian, ☐ assent procedure for minors or the cognitively impaired
(Check all that apply) Note: HSCL makes the final determination on waiver of a signed consent form or consent. Justification must be provided for waiver of signed consent form or consent.

no o. indicate the type of data you will be acquiring in this project ☐ private health information, ☐ academic records, ☐ social security information, ☐ KU ID number

no p. other data that may increase participant risk (46.101 (b) (2) (ii) in the areas listed
☐ criminal ☐ civil, ☐ financial, ☐ employment, ☐ reputation

11. If any of the key personnel or research team members of this project have a financial interest* in a project sponsor or a provider of goods or services to the project, the individual and the relationship must be disclosed.

☒ Neither I nor any member of the research team has a financial interest in the project sponsor or a provider of goods or services to this project.

☐ I am disclosing the following financial interest(s)** :

Name of Individual	Role on Project	Financial Interest Entity

* An individual's financial interests include those of the individual, his or her spouse, dependent children, and other members of the personal household (i.e., ownership, compensation received or anticipated, a position of officer or director, or receipt of fees or commissions).

** If this financial interest has not already been disclosed on a Conflict of Interest report, an ad hoc disclosure via the Conflict of Interest reporting form may also be required. Direct inquiries to coi@ku.edu. COI resource information is also available at the following link: http://www.rcr.ku.edu/coi/index.shtml

Additional COI Notes:

Complete the following questions on this page. Please do not use continuation sheets.

12. Approximate number of subjects to be involved in the research: 300

13. Project Purpose(s):

The purpose of this study is to better understand the connection between listening anxiety and verbal aggression within romantic relationships and how the connection might be moderated by interpersonal trust.

14. Describe the proposed subjects (age, sex, race, or other special characteristics). If there is a physical or mental health condition that characterizes the subjects to be included in the study, please indicate this here as well.

The proposed study imposes no requirement of special characteristics upon the subjects chosen to participate. All individuals (any age, sex, race, etc.) will be eligible.

15. Describe how the subjects are to be selected. Please indicate how you will gain access to, and recruit these subjects for participation in the project. That is, will you recruit participants through word-of-mouth, fliers or poster, newspaper ads, public or private membership or employee lists, etc. Drawings/raffles are not permitted for payment or recruiting. (If subjects are to be recruited from a cooperating institution, such as a clinic or other service organization be aware that subjects' names and other private information, such as medical diagnosis, may not be obtained without the subjects' written permission.)

The subjects will be drawn from the Communication Studies departmental students enrolled in COMS courses (including but not limited to the COMS 130 pool of research). Students will receive course credit or extra credit for participating voluntarily.

16. Single page abstract of the proposed procedures in the project – consent to the post-project security measures. (The abstract should be a succinct overview of the project without jargon, unexplained abbreviations, or technical terminology. Here is where you must provide details about Yes answers to items under question 10.a through 10.p of the application: drugs, cooperating institutions, medical information requested, security measures and post-project plans for tapes, questionnaires, surveys, and other data, and detailed debriefing procedures for deception projects.)

This will be a web-based survey (Qualtrics). Once in the site, participants will be asked to read an information statement prior to participating (Appendix A; see attached document). Students will check the box to acknowledge that they are eighteen years or older. Once the participant has agreed to participate, they enter a second page where the survey will begin with questions pertaining to verbal aggressiveness (Appendix B). Next, participants will be directed to the group of questions pertaining to interpersonal trust (Appendix C). The next page of the survey includes one measure for listening anxiety (Appendix D) and one measure for general receiver apprehension (Appendix E) combined. All items for the four measures will use a Likert type scale. In addition, participants will answer general demographic questions about sex, age, religion, etc. (Appendix F). Finally, the participants will be given a receipt to print out for their instructor in order to receive credit for participation (Appendix G).

Appendix B: Survey Information Statement

Information Statement

Information Regarding this Study:

The Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand the influence of listening anxiety on verbal aggression. This will entail your completion of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaire should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of conflict in romantic relationships. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission. It is possible, however, with Internet communications, that through intent or accident someone other than the intended recipient may see your response. Only identification numbers will be reported if necessary. There will never be a way for those reading results to connect identity with data. All data collected will become part of a database used solely for research purposes by the researcher only. All answers in the questionnaire will remain in strict confidentiality. Excluding future publications, the researchers are the only individuals that read the specific results to each questionnaire. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or email.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are over the age of eighteen. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email irb@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

Natalie S. Hoskins
Investigator
nataliehoskins@ku.edu

Adrianne Kunkel, Ph.D.
Faculty Supervisor
adkunkel@ku.edu

Department of Communication Studies
102 Bailey Hall ● University of Kansas ● Lawrence, KS 66045 ● (785) 864-1083

I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older by checking below. (check box)

Appendix C: Verbal Aggressiveness Scale

Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (Infante, 1986) (1-5 scale, with 1=Almost never true and 5=Almost always true)

1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking an individual's intelligence when I attack their ideas.
2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften the stubbornness.
3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
4. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
5. When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.
6. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.
7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
8. I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.
10. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
11. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
12. When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.
13. I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
14. When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.
15. When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
17. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
19. When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.

Appendix D: Dyadic Trust Scale

Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980) (1-7 scale, with 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree)

1. My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.
2. There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.
3. My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
4. I feel that I can trust my partner completely.
5. My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.
6. I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration.
7. My partner treats me fairly and justly.
8. I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.

Appendix E: Informational Reception Apprehension Test for Listening

Informational Reception Apprehension Test for Listening (IRAT-L; Wheeless, Preiss, & Gayle, 1997) (1-5 scale, with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree)

1. While listening, I get nervous when a lot of information is given at once.
2. I get impatient and anxious when listening to someone discuss theoretical, intellectual issues.
3. I have avoided listening to abstract ideas because I was afraid I could not make sense of what was said.
4. Many classes are annoying and uncomfortable because the teacher floods you with detailed information in the lectures.
5. I feel agitated or uneasy when someone tells me there is not necessarily a clear, concrete way to deal with an important problem.
6. While listening, I feel tense when I have to analyze details carefully.
7. It is frustrating to listen to people discuss practical problems in philosophical and abstract ways.
8. When I hear abstract material, I am afraid I will be unable to remember it very well.
9. I experience anxiety when listening to complex ideas others tell me.
10. When I listen to complicated information, I often fear that I will misinterpret it.
11. I feel relaxed and confident while listening, even when a lot of information is given at once.
12. Listening to complex ideas is a pleasant, enjoyable experience for me.
13. When listening, I feel relaxed and confident that I can remember abstract ideas that are being explained.

Appendix F: Demographics

1. What is your sex?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your primary language?
4. Please indicate the highest level of education completed.
5. Are you currently in a romantic relationship?
6. If so, what is your current relationship status?
7. If so, how long have you been in your current relationship?
8. What is your area of origin?
9. What was the composition of your family growing up?
10. What was the sex of your primary guardian?
11. How important would you say religion was to your parents or guardians when you were growing up?
12. To what religious faith did your parents or guardians belong?

Appendix G: Student Receipt for Credit

Receipt for Students:

COMS Research Online Study Receipt

Thank you for your participation!

This receipt indicates that the student _____ participated in the study titled Anxiety and Verbal Aggression on the date of ___/___/_____.

This study was conducted by the following researchers:

Natalie S. Hoskins

Dr. Adrianne Kunkel

The aforementioned study was worth 5 points and these points should be applied toward the student's research points for their COMS class. Please keep this receipt for your records and present it to your instructor/professor at the end of the semester if they need further proof of you participating in this study.